

## Xavier streak among best in state history

Written by Mark Dukes

Sunday, 12 June 2011 20:50 - Last Updated Sunday, 12 June 2011 21:17

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The legacy of Xavier girls soccer is yet to be fully realized. The Saints have six straight state championships, a remarkable sum to be sure. But since most of its starting lineup returns next season, making Xavier the undoubted 2012 preseason favorite, that string may stretch to seven or more.

Already, the consecutive championship streak is one of the best in state history. Only Bettendorf's tennis teams and Cedar Falls' swimming teams (each with six in a row) in the 1990s rival Xavier among girls teams.

Not to diminish things by any means, but the Xavier girls still have some work to do to become the most decorated Metro team in history.

The standard-bearer is Washington boys swimming, a program with 27 state championships. The Warriors were to swimming what John Wooden and UCLA was to college basketball at one time. They won 11 straight state meets from 1964 to '75, with Hal Krizan at the helm for 10 of them. Jim Voss was the coach for the last of that string, Voss' first of a state-record 15 state crowns.

I don't remember a whole lot of the Krizan teams but I covered several of the Voss-led Washington teams. Voss did something very difficult, and that is to follow a legend and perpetuate a program. Voss had two separate runs of four straight state championships.

Another less recognized streak is held by Marion boys cross country back in the 1940s and '50s. Those teams were coached by Les Hipple (you've read some of Hipple's exploits at MSR with excerpts of Dan Kellams' fine book). Marion won nine straight state titles, albeit with an asterisk. The 1947 state meet was canceled due to weather conditions, but the Indians did win nine in a row when the meet was contested.

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Hipple, who required his athletes participate in three sports, often took football and basketball players and turned them into excellent track and field and cross country athletes. In six of the nine state meets that Marion won, it had an individual state champion as well.

There are some common denominators with these schools that win consecutive state titles. One may be the success and longevity of the coach. Or, it may be the idea that success breeds success, meaning younger athletes aspire to match their peers' accomplishments. Sometimes it is a group of families that produce several outstanding athletes in a given time frame.

Certainly there are many other excellent streaks in Iowa high school sports. Some of the most notable are Camanche and Dubuque Wahlert boys' tennis, Norway baseball, Ames and Iowa City High boys track and Don Bosco and West Des Moines Dowling in dual meet wrestling.

Xavier soccer may not have the longest of state championship strings, but it is certainly right there with some of the best in Metro and state history. And it's not over yet.